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*Stefan Gradmann*

## Union catalogue(s) and interlibrary loan/document delivery

### *The German point(s) of view*

It probably will not be surprising that the German answer to the question posed in this section of the workshop "what is the current role of the union catalogue and what will it be?" takes a very specific turn: first of all I will have to modify the question itself, for there is no such thing as **one** German Union Catalogue and accordingly there is no such thing as **one** uniform German point of view.

Instead, there are several instances integrating holdings information from German libraries on a regional or even sometimes national level. In order to understand the German situation one thus has first to develop a notion of the **diversity** of the German situation with respect to automated ILL-transactions and document delivery.

I will not go as far as to state that there are as many points of view with respect to this as there are players on the German field - even if such a statement were only slightly exaggerated. A uniform 'German point of view' is hard to express and I will first of all try to give some reasons for this.

### *Diversity*

There is a German union catalogue in the true sense of the term for periodicals, the Zeitschriftendatenbank (ZDB) maintained by the Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut. ZDB is a database used by almost all of the important German libraries for the shared cataloguing of periodicals and this results in a high quality of the bibliographic aspects of the ZDB database. However, ZDB was originally designed as a shared cataloguing instance with facilities for conventional sequential output (mainly microfiche catalogues) and this output was designed to be used subsequently for the conventional steering of ILL operations. As a consequence, the holdings format of ZDB has not been genuinely designed for automated ILL-transaction and the



holdings data contained in ZDB therefore require important modifications to be used in any scenario for automated transaction.

Moreover, at least three different technical scenarios<sup>1</sup> for the usage of this database in the context of ILL and document delivery are currently being discussed and these do not comply to a common functional model.

1. The first of these models proposes to implement services for ILL and Document Delivery directly within the technical context of the original ZDB database, the most prominent examples of this approach being services offered by DBI such as *DBI-LINK*. The basic idea in this case is that of a dedicated application run by DBI and that would be serving all German libraries.
2. The second model is based on the idea of a technically autonomous service offered by a consortium of supplying libraries and based upon local copies of ZDB (typically on CD-ROM). Such a service is offered by *JASON* in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The libraries in this concept dispose of local copies of the original ZDB database (distributed via CD-ROM) and are organized in a chain-like supply model.
3. The third model is that of a service for ILL and Document delivery integrating the ZDB database together with analytical contents information in the working frame of a regional library network as is the case in our GBV-Pica network and using the internal routing algorithm of the Pica system (in this case) as well as the other existing facilities for ILL offered by this system for processing the holding informations contained in the ZDB-data.

- The situation is significantly different with regard to monographs and related holdings information: In this field, the primary source of information are six independent regional library networks for shared cataloguing plus one national network regrouping some of the libraries serving federal institutions<sup>2</sup>.

Some of these networks still roughly correspond to the traditional ILL-regions (*Leihverkehrsregionen*) that had originally been set up for conventional ILL-operations, but the structural and administrative convergence between these networks and the ILL-regions is high in some cases (Bavaria, Südwestdeutscher Bibliotheksverbund) or close to none (as in the case of GBV including four ILL-regions and thus inclined to transcend this structure) and there is no global concept systematically linking the library networks to the ILL-regions on a functional level, not to mention the widespread lack of technical coherence in this field.



A striking example of loosely integrated resources (to say the least) can be found in one of the most important federal states, North Rhine-Westphalia, where two technically and functionally independent networks do exist: one of them (HBZ-Verbund) designed for shared cataloguing and the other one (JASON) for the electronic ordering and delivery of periodical articles.

- Finally, there is diversity with regard to the technical solutions used by the regional networks themselves.

Two of the networks are cooperating with Pica. One of these (GBV) has by now put to work and partly adapted Pica's ILL-system, which is fully integrated in the context of the regional database and which offers facilities for on-line document ordering and the electronic supply of documents. GBV (and HEBIS, the Hessen regional system in the near future) are thus capable of interacting with external ILL-partners very much like one virtual library. The close technical cooperation with Pica and libraries in the Netherlands has even led to plans for a common ILL-region for GBV and the Pica-Network. These plans are giving their first operative results these days and the Netherlands have been added to the map in the annex slide for that reason (not in order to anticipate any other serious political implications).

The other four networks still use systems exclusively designed for shared cataloguing. These non-Pica networks are in a transitional stage not only with respect to ILL-functions: the common use of a new technical solution for these four regions is planned for 1998 and the respective federal states have formed a consortium for choosing and adapting a new, common technical solution. This 'future system' is planned to support ILL-operations on a regional level, too, but until then it is extremely difficult to imagine a common functional model for all of the regional networks.

This should be sufficient as far as diversity is concerned. The aim was to demonstrate the rather scattered nature of the German situation with its multiplicity of complementing, yet sometimes conflicting factors.

This diversity is due of course partly - or mostly - to the fact that the primary responsibility in cultural affairs is on the side of the federal states and that central government instances in Bonn (or Berlin in the future) are assigned a comparatively modest role in the game. But this political context cannot be made responsible exclusively for the sometimes all too loose integration of relevant resources in Germany.



### ... and (re)integration

Still, there have been serious attempts in the past for the **integration** or **reintegration** of these distributed resources. I will only pick out two technically oriented approaches leaving aside the genuinely political initiative SUBITO that will be dealt with in another contribution to this workshop.

- One important approach has been the off-line-integration of the bibliographic and holdings information of the regional networks in an attempt to build a union catalogue for monographs (*Verbundkatalog maschinenlesbarer Daten, VK*).

VK (which, has been created by the DBI) has been of great value for conventional ILL-operations but has always suffered from being far from up-to-date and from the many duplicate entries persisting in the database inspite of very serious efforts made by DBI for deduplication. My personal opinion is that VK is not and never will be a suitable resource for automated ILL-transactions because of its lack of consistency and timeliness.

- The other attempt currently undertaken is the integration of the regional networks together with ZDB (and more host based information suppliers) in a virtual union catalogue using interfacing standards for information retrieval (Z 39.50) in the DBV-OSI project. The results obtained in this project on the level of interfacing retrieval systems are technically appealing and to some extent familiar to the European library community as the basic function library together with the API is being reused in the ONE project.

Important participants in this project are regional networks (BVB, SWB, GBV) and the ZDB. During the next stage of DBV-OSI we are prepared to implement functions for document ordering (based on ES ItemOrder/ILL PDU embedded in e-mail) and document supply. The name of this project (Deutscher Bibliothekenverbund / DBV-OSI) may somewhat incorrectly be translated as 'Union Catalogue of German Libraries' in order to point out the ambition underlying this activity.

The project is very likely to be a technical success, but some problems may be anticipated due to the technically and functionally divergent starting level of participants - I will come back to this point at the end of this presentation. Still, DBV-OSI is supposed to deliver the technical toolset that is required for the creation of a nationwide service for rapid document ordering and supply. The organizational aspects of such a new service are to be defined within the framework of the SUBITO-initiative mentioned before.



## *Future issues*

The ZDB-database as serials union catalogue will certainly be a key factor in automated ILL-processing of periodical articles in any of the scenarios developed above. Still, as has been pointed out before, services for document ordering and supply related to this serials union catalogue may be implemented in different technical and functional contexts. Apart from various political considerations two key complementary activities in this area might be decisive for the choice of the functionally most attractive scenario:

1. The holdings information linked to the title records in ZDB have to be restructured in a way to allow for automated ILL-transactions (such an activity is currently being prepared by DBI for the original ZDB-file, and has been successively undertaken already by JASON and GBV for the holdings information of their respective customers).
2. Document ordering and delivery services can and should be substantially enhanced by the addition of analytical contents data linked to the title records of periodicals, thus ensuring the quality of ordering information and ideally freeing libraries from the need of manually/intellectually checking the orders received. An example for such an activity is the combination of ZDB-data, reprocessed holdings information and the SwetsScan service for analytical contents information as the basic platform for GBV's RAPDOC service. The same has been undertaken as a complementary activity for the JASON service mentioned before in adding an articles database, JADE, to its functional context. A similar step is being prepared (and may soon be ready for service) by DBI with the integration of OCLC's FirstSearch service together with ZDB data in the proposed service DBI-First.

Generally and with regard to monographs in particular a key issue is the future role of the regional networks that still requires more or less substantial redefinition. It was a basic assumption of DBV-OSI that the interfacing technology of the project would link together the regional systems. This assumption is valid for the first phase of the project being completed these days and that has led to an interconnection of the retrieval functions.

But for the time being, this assumption can only be held for the second phase when making some modifications. The aim of this second stage is the integration of document ordering and delivery functions via ES ItemOrder and asynchronous operations based on existing standards.



The crucial point in this context is the fact that ordering functions are implemented within the technical framework of the regional networking system of Pica-GBV, whereas the other partners (namely SWB and BVB) do plan to offer this functionality at a regional level after having implemented their 'future system' but meanwhile have to integrate, substituting functions at the library level.

As a consequence, DBV-OSI, meant to be something like a virtual union catalogue linking the regional networks, will have to clear some serious obstacles in order to serve as a viable platform for ILL operations and services for document delivery.

I would like to stress the point, that the main problems to be expected here are not due to the technical approach chosen (based on recognized and operative international standards such as Z 39.50): the main problem to be solved will result from the differing levels of service implementation (Isolated libraries vs. Networked libraries as service providers).

It will not be much of a surprise that I am personally convinced of the regional networks having to operate a functional shift from mere shared-cataloguing-networks to a model in which they become focal nodes for holding information in a virtual union catalogue.

The regional networks might thus use the interfacing techniques being developed in DBV-OSI in a homogeneous functional model enabling them to offer technically consistent services for document ordering and delivery and for ILL. If they succeed in operating this paradigmatical shift the regional networks will be a key factor for services offering delivery of and access to information within the frame of the virtual union catalogue DBV-OSI. I hold to this conviction even if the regional networks are more or less prepared for such a process in the present situation.

Still, even if this disparity could be overcome the one major problem to be solved in the future will be that of the functional and technical integration of such a virtual union catalogue for monographs holdings with the periodicals union database ZDB. And, this closing remark is more than just a matter of intellectual honesty there may be players in the field having a completely divergent vision of things to come!

The only point I am sure all of us in Germany are currently ready to agree upon is that the non-existence of THE German union catalogue has led to a challenging and interesting situation with regard to ILL and document delivery.

The situation is probably difficult to understand for our colleagues from outside Germany: you might wonder how we can afford to keep working



with this multitude of divergent concepts in Germany with relatively few integrating factors ...

- (1) Cf. the diagrams reproduced as part of the annex of this contribution.
- (2) Cf. the map reproduced in the annex of this paper.